Flying Snake

A Journal of Cryptozoology, Folklore and Forteana

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Front cover: Spotted mole near London,late 18th Century, from The Naturalist`s Pocket Magazine

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DR DEVOS DIARY

"*For I pray God for the introduction of new creatures into this island. For I pray God for the ostriches of Salisbury Plain, the beavers of the Medway and silver fish of Thames." Christopher Smart `Rejoice in the Lamb`.Poet,naturalist,lunatic (1722-1771)*

Hello again my marvellous mysterious multitude of magazine readers! I apologise for my tragic absence over the last few months;I`ve been hunting a giant blue and black wasp the size of an Alsatian dog in the depths of the Ardennes in Belgium. Sadly this is a complete lie or delusion! Great if it were true. But seriously(yes I can do serious), I have been working on the Muirhead`s Mysteries book which I at last completed in about May and the text and images are now in the hands of Jon Downes of the Centre for Fortean Zoology. I don`t know when it will be published and I think Jon feels the same way,but hopefully it won`t be too long but obviously and quite correctly it has to join the queue. I am very pleased with the finished item and it just remains to finalise the front and back covers and arrangement of the text and images. It was a bit of a nightmare in the final stages as I somehow managed to create multiple and almost identical copies of the same document so I am relieved it`s all finished.

In about two weeks I am speaking at the CFZ`s Weird Weekend on the Mystery Animals of Hong Kong. Of course by the time you read this it will have been and gone. I am pleased with the way my preparation for the talk is working out, it never ceases to amaze me how Fortean the zoology is there now and has been for well over one hundred years. I remember how sceptical I was in the mid-1990s when Jon first began the on-running project that is `The Mystery Animals of Hong Kong` but how wrong I was, with everything from transparent mantis`s to the mysterious Luting Fish which seems very much like the dugong or mermaid.

I have noticed how Fortean Macclesfield is lately. I don`t mean it`s becoming more Fortean, just that it seems to be a "window" for a certain type of Forteana, I`m thinking of Alien Big Cats. In the last few months I`ve come across about five separate ABC incidents,the most recent one was reported in the Macclesfield Express on May 26th 2015. There have been others,in the suburbs and villages around Macclesfield. Is this because the environment is conducive to mystery cats or is it that my town`s mystery cats have been better documented? Also, what population of prey,like rabbits, small birds can sustain a handful of ABCs in an environment peculiar to that of their usual habitat? Mind you, ABCs can turn up in the unlikeliest of places. I`m thinking of Hong Kong. But until issue 10 of FS,goodbye!

An Anomalous Giant Rabbit in Kentucky in 1955

Jim Krupa and Richard Muirhead

This is a summary of correspondence between myself and an American academic Jim Krupa late in 2014 and also Carl Marshall:

December 23rd 2014: Dear Sir,

This might seem like a strange question, but I read in the Evening Star newspaper, (Washington D.C.) for Feb 13th 1955 that a giant cottontail rabbit had been found and sent to the biology department of Kentucky University, it was 12 inches high and weighed 10 pounds.
Do you have any records and photos of it?

Greetings Richard, 23-12-14.

Yes I have the rabbit here in the vertebrate teaching collection. See photo.(Pg 9 of this Flying Snake). I have not keyed it out to be sure, but I think it is a European hare of the genus *Lepus* most likely. It certainly isn't a cottontail although why a European hare was in eastern Kentucky fascinates me. I have always been fascinated about the history of this specimen. Could you possibly send me the Evening Star article on this rabbit? I would most love to have a copy of it for the museum records and to know more about this specimen.

Cheers, Jim 23-12-14

The more I think about it, the more I would be most appreciative if you could email me a copy of the Evening Star article. Cheers,Jim

Greeting Rich, 23-12-14

It seems 99% certain that this is the European Hare (*Lepus europaeus*). They have been introduced around the Great Lakes Region of North America. I think this was the result of captives escaping. My guess is that this rabbit escaped from a cage in eastern Kentucky. The article from Montana is

probably referring to the white-tailed jackrabbit that lives there. I have seen and collected many of these over the years. They are big but 15 pounds is unusual. I have always been fascinated by big rabbits.

Let me try and think of other strange animal stories.

Cheers, Jim.

(On Page 9 of this issue of F.S. - A very large hare found in Kentucky in the mid 1950s ,permission for reproduction from James Krupa, Department of Biology,Kentucky University.)

23-12-14

Thanks Jim and if you ever recall any other strange stories from Kentucky etc I`d be very interested.

I have now completed searching all U.S states including Kentucky using the phrases " giant rabbit" and "giant hare" and sent all I thought to be of interest. There were quite a few refs to "giant Flemish rabbit" but I presumed that was some kind of pet.

Bests, Rich.

Carl Marshall gave his opinion of the giant rabbit:

Hi Ric, 29-12-2014

Hope you had a great Christmas and have a very happy and prosperous new year.

Looks to me like a swamp rabbit *Sylvilagus aquaticus* going by its colouration (probably slightly faded), shape and size of its ears, and what can be seen of its cranial morphology (if its skull is indeed present). Swampers are the largest of the cottontails although their ears are slightly smaller proportionately which I believe can be seen in your photograph, but at 12 inches [high] and 10 pounds in weight this specimen would have been truly enormous! Male swampers usually weigh between 4.004 lb and 5.631 lb with an average of 4.927 lb and females between 3.629 lb and 5.882 lb averaging at 4.764 lb, and measure between 17.8 inches to 21.7 inches from the tip of the nose to the tip of its tail but averaging at 19.7 inches. 6

If an average sized swamper is about 5.000 lb and 18.0 inches in length and a not uncommonly large specimen is about 5.600 lb and 22.0 inches long, could an individual displaying a mutation such as gigantism potentially reach 10.000 lb and measure 12.0 inches in height? - I would estimate about 6.500 lb - 7.000 lb and 26.0 inches - 29.0 inches long would be about maximum if an individual was displaying this or a similar mutation. Which is not too far from the reported size of the Kentucky university specimen.

Or maybe it was some kind of hybrid with domestic stock - but do all domesticated rabbits descend from the European common rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*? And if so can *Oryctolagus* viably hybridise with *Sylvilagus*?

Either way its almost certainly *not* of the genus *Lepus* but going solely by a photograph alone and not having access to the specimen for detailed examination I wouldn't want to commit myself further.
Hope this helps.

Yours sincerely Carl.

Location of Kentucky

Wikipedia Creative Commons

Giant Rabbit Puzzles

Evening Star (Washington D.C.) for Feb 13th 1955

SHOOTS A CURIOUS ANIMAL.

George Ross, a Resident of Nebraska, Secures a Queer Specimen— A Red Rabbit.

George Ross, who lives in Butler county, Neb., brought in a curiosity the other day. While hunting on Buck island, in the Platte river, a few days ago, he fired at what he spuposed was a mink, but when he picked it up he found it was a rabbit, blood-red in color. It is the size of an ordinary cotton-tail, or brush rabbit, but the fur or hair is much finer. The eyes are of an amber yellow, and some who have examined it pronounce it an albino. Ross has refused $20 for his find, and says he will have it dressed and mounted, when he will present it to the State Horticultural society. Nothing like it has ever been seen in Nebraska before.

Reproduced with permission of Jim Krupa

University of Kentucky

Does The Dark Continent Still Conceal Hitherto Undescribed Rhinoceros species?

Carl P. Marshall

"In Africa the Past has hardly stopped breathing".
Alfred Aloysius "Trader" Horn, 1927.

Liberia's pygmy rhinoceros

It wasn't until 1913, when animal collector Hans Schomburgk returned to Europe from Liberia in North-West Africa with a live pygmy hippopotamus specimen Choeropsis liberiensis or Hexaprotodon liberiensis that the zoologists finally started to accept the possibility that relatively large unknown animals could still be awaiting formal discovery in some of the more remote and inaccessible areas of Sub-Saharan Africa. While laboriously searching for his secretive pygmy hippopotamus, Schomburgk was also informed of a type of pygmy rhinoceros which the native Kru said was distinct from the large forest hog Hylochoerus meinertzhageni a big black boar with prominent tusks of which a variety is found in Eastern Liberia. Unfortunately all Schromburgk's attempts to obtain a specimen of this mysterious creature failed and to this day no western explorer has ever seen, let alone collected and described one of these "little mountain rhinoceroses".

Professor E. L. Trouessart once said of the pygmy hippopotamus:

"The presence of this species in this particular area in the loop of the Niger leads one to suppose that this country was an island separated from the continent at a time when the Atlantic still penetrated the north of West Africa, that is to say during the Eocene".

According to excepted Geological and Paleontological evidence this theory does indeed appear (at least in part!) to be accurate. If the pygmy hippopotamus evolved in this part of Africa due to its prolonged isolation, could not a pygmy species of rhinoceros also have evolved there into a forested mountain habitat and now be perfectly adapted to it? Land animals which live on islands are generally smaller than the same or similar species living on the nearest continent therefore the rhinoceroses living on Java and Sumatra are smaller than those found in India and the Indochinese Peninsula. This phenomenon, when territory influences the evolutionary process is referred to as *Insular Dwarfism*; which a lack of viable sexual partners, dietary requirements and possibly climate all play a part and occurs not only on small islands but also cave systems, desert oases, isolated valleys and most relevant here, isolated mountain ranges! If the country in the loop of the Niger was once an island one might expect its ancient fauna to have dwarf characteristics such as the pygmy hippopotamus. If there

were pygmy hippopotami why not pygmy rhinoceroses? There are no known rhinos (extinct or extant) living in this part of Africa south of the Niger and Senegal rivers. This raises the question why when they date from the same geological period, have similar behaviours to elephants, and during the 19th Century; until they were proven to be polyphyletic and had their taxonomy revised, were considered to be sister taxa - Pachydermata a now obsolete taxonomic order. Maybe there are/were rhinoceroses in this area and they remained undiscovered because they are/were diminutive and could shelter in mountains covered in thick forest! This theory might also account for the absence of fossil remains as mountainous forests are generally acidic and not an effective environment for producing fossils.

Even to this day there is still a good argument to show this part of North-West Africa could still conceal small isolated populations of mountain rhinoceros similar in habits and possibly even appearance to the Sumatran rhinoceros *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis* (which it may or may not be related to) and which coincidentally is the only extant member of a genus which is the least derived of all extant rhinos; sharing more traits with prehistoric species such as the extinct woolly rhinoceros *Coelodonta antiquitatis* and is clearly the smallest known living species (approx 1,100 - 1,800 lb) no doubt due to its forest dwelling habits.

Liberia has been at peace for over ten years now, but for years, due to the volatile nature of Liberia's politics and the subsequent ravages from the civil wars preventing serious scientific research into solving this subject, the Liberian Pygmy Rhinoceros seems to have been unjustly forgotten. I personally intend to plan a future expedition to Liberia in search of any evidence of this little beast.

Blancou's Forest Rhinoceros

Liberia is not the only part of Africa where rhinos have been reported in unexpected areas. Both the black rhinoceros Diceros bicornis and the white rhinoceros Ceratotherium simum live in open country, mimosa covered steppe and wooded savannah; they sometimes venture through forest clearings into the rivers where they bathe, but they never live in the heart of thick wet forests. In fact the huge area they occupy in the eastern half of Africa hardly touches the tropical rainforest except around the foothills of Mount Kenya and Kilimanjaro. In 1931, Geraud de Galassus, an official of the French colonial administration of the eastern Cameroons, informed wildlife official Lucien Blancou that there were rhinos in the forest in the south of the Batouri subdivision which he administered. At first Blancou thought these must be remnant populations of savannah rhinoceroses but when he became chief game inspector in French Equatorial Africa his opinion changed. Between 1949 and 1953 Blancou col-

lected from three other French officials information confirming the first report by Geraud de Galassus. According to the natives of the Kelle, Ouesso and Dongou districts on the middle Congo river there was a species of rhinoceros in the very depths of the thick forest in those districts. This was later confirmed by an engineer in the Forestry Department called Moiraud who had heard the same story from Europeans living at Epena.
Blancou concluded:
The Africans in the north of the Kelle district, especially the pygmies know a forest animal larger than a buffalo, almost as large as an elephant, but which is not a hippopotamus. Its tracks are only seen at long intervals, but they fear it more than any other dangerous animal. The sketch of its footprint which they drew for Mr Millet is that of a rhinoceros... Around Ouesso the natives talk of a big animal which does have a horn on its nose - though I don't know whether it has one or several... Around Epena, Impfondo and Dongou, the presence of a beast which sometimes disembowels elephants is also known, but it does not seem to be so prevalent there now as in the previous districts. A specimen was supposed to have been killed twenty years ago at Dongou, but on the left bank of the Ubangi and the Belgian Congo.
Summary:
Of the two types of forest rhinos referred to in the preceding accounts, from data and information provided, I personal opinion is the most likely species to formally exist, and one day be potentially described as a new species would be the Liberian Mountain Rhinoceros due to the isolated mountainous habitat this rhino is said to inhabit, but due to the country's ongoing civil wars and ravenous bush meat trade they may have already unfortunately become extinct! Blancou himself admitted that the evidence for the Batouri Forest Rhino was insufficient; but pointed out that the evidence upon which the okapi, the forest hog, the Congo peacock and many other creatures discovered was equally deficient! But what if the answer to the puzzle of the Batouri Forest Rhinos identity was not an undescribed species but an unexpected behavioural trait, this unusual behaviour could be attributed to unexpected populations of black rhino very occasionally roaming into thick forest in search of resources.

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Fig 1. White Rhinoceros *Ceratotherium simum* photographed at Cumbria's South Lakes

Following page: Artwork by Maureen Ashfield.

Fig. 2. Pygmy Hippopotamus *Choeropsis liberiensis* or *Hexaprotodon liberiensis* photographed at Cumbria's South Lakes Animal Park.

Fig. 3. The Pygmy Rhinoceros of Liberia by Maureen Ashfield.

Seals off the coast of Vietnam and Hong Kong

These photos of a seal found off Vietnam provided by Grant Abel of Ocean Park Hong Kong

This letter was sent to me by Pat Morris on July 22 nd 2011.

Hi Richard,

Can't tell you anything definitive. I can tell you that seals wander widely and occasionally apparently get lost, especially young ones. We've had a northern elephant seal (from the coast of North America) show up in Japan. A hooded seal, from the North Atlantic appeared in San Diego, California (assumed to have traversed the northwest passage). Hooded seals from the North Atlantic are found in the Caribbean with some regularity (other species of arctic seals less frequently). A southern elephant seal (probably from one of the sub- antarctic islands, Kerguelen? Crozet?, Heard?) showed up around the Arabian peninsula. I'm less familiar with the rare sightings from Asia, but assume that wandering arctic seals from Russia or northern Japan may occasionally end up down in Hong Kong or Vietnam. Less probable but possible would be a Hawaiian monk seal (they are less prone to long range travels, but it's possible) or another southern elephant seal coming up from the subantarctic (Macquarie?). With respect to dead bodies, I know that decomposed manatee carcasses are sometimes mistaken for seals by the public and I suppose the same is probably true of dugong carcasses. A year or two ago a north Pacific grey whale was seen in the Mediterranean (northwest passage again?
hard to imagine the Panama canal without being seen). There is also the possibility of escaped captive seals (some California sea lions escaped into the Gulf of Mexico years ago). As I said, nothing definitive, but seals travel incredible distances at sea, so thoroughly possible.

Sincerely,
Pat Morris
Research Coordinator, UC Natural Reserve, Año Nuevo COH/Long Marine Lab 100 Shaffer Rd.
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
USA

A letter from Ocean Park employee, Grant Abel, Zoological Operations and Education. August 1st 2011.

Dear Richard

Thank you for your interesting inquiry. I have also seen this report in the HK Telegraph of 1914 and have difficulty believing the account to be of seals.The finless porpoise (Neophocaena phocaenoides) or Dugong (Dugong dugon) are the most likely species that this account might have referred to. Finless porpoises are commonly found even today in close proximity to Cheung Chau and their range could have extended to waters closer to the Soko group. I also understand the estuary (or adjacent waters) was once sea grass habitat and possibly part of the historical range for Dugong, as this species is known to occur in waters near Hainan and possibly Vietnam. There could have been a misidentification between sirenia and phocidae, which may explain the account.
Have you tried the Hong Kong University? If not, I am happy to follow up with further inquiries and we also know of researchers that study Dugong who could have further information of their historical range and timeline of extirpation, which may coincide with the 1914 account.
The Chinese White Dolphin (Sousa chinensis) was also first described by Pehr (Peter) Osbeck, a Swedish naturalist in 1753 and there may be other accounts of earlier explorers that noticed marine mammals in these waters.
I hope these notes help and please don't hesitate to email if you think I can assist further. It's a very interesting subject.

Best regards

Grant Abel

On the following page is a letter to me from Grant dated December 14th 2011

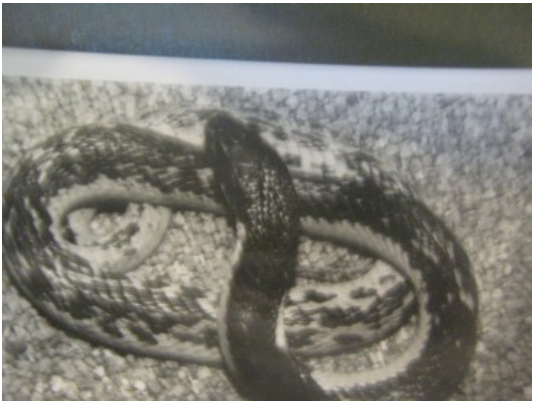
December 14th 2011
Hello Richard

Well it must be the year for seals. In September we received advice that a true Seal had been caught by fishermen in Vietnam. We were disbelieving at first, however the images that were sent to us confirmed that a (possibly young) Spotted Seal (Phoca largha) was held up in a bathroom in Vietnam, apparently caught accidentally somewhere in the South China Sea in August. (photos attached)
Despite making arrangements to ship the animal to HKG for rehabilitation (we are the nearest facility to rehab and care for marine mammals) the animal reportedly died and was eaten.
We are still looking for information as its difficult to believe the animal wasn't smuggled, however a colleague in japan has also been hearing reports of Seals in that area of the country as well, giving rise to the possibility of some True Seals being South of their range. This plays to the 1914 newspaper article of a seal being seen in HK waters as well.
We are continuing to review information and contact as many people as possible to keep a look out and I thought of your inquiry and just wanted to give you an update.

Best regards ,Grant

Chinese Pink Dolphin. Wikipedia Creative Commons.

Unusually marked cobras



Middle and lower photos from J.D.Romer collection,Zoological Society of London

G.289.

THE Flying Serpent,

OR,

Strange News out of

ESSEX

BEING

A true Relation of a Monstrous Serpent which hath divers times been seen at a Parish called *Henham on the Mount* within four Miles of *Saffron-Walden*.

Showing the length, proportion, and bigness of the Serpent, the place where it commonly lurks, and what means hath been used to kill it.

Also a discourse of other Serpents, and particularly of a Cockatrice killed at Saffron-Walden.

The truth of this Relation of the Serpent is attested.

By { *Richard Jackson* Church-Warden.
Thomas Prestland Constable.
John Rayner Overseers of the Poor.
Barnaby Thurgood
Samuel Garrett Houlholders.
Richard Seely
William Green.

With Allowance.

LONDON, Printed and sold by *Peter Lillicrap* in *Clerkenwell*.

A Possible Fortean Fox in the pages of Janet and Colin Bord

Richard George

Italics by the author.

On a misty evening in January 1978, a couple driving home from Minehead had a Fortean encounter of truly chilling proportions.

"We saw, coming up the hill towards us on the right-hand side of the road, the most extraordinary dog. It was *Alsatian type* but with *long dirty white hair* which stood up around it in spikes, as if frozen. It looked almost transparent. Its eyes were *red and glowing*, the headlights could have accounted for this of course, but not for its baleful look,head down and *staring at us sideways* as it plodded along. Not many dogs make you exclaim as you pass them and still, when I think of it, it gives me goose shivers.

We were busy and forgot about it but my husband died in horrible circumstances later that year…

I later met briefly some one else who said they had seen this,"it also presaged death " quoted in Janet and Colin Bord, *Modern Mysteries Of Britain (1987)* , (p .45)

Richard Muirhead, in his piece, in Flying Snake 1.3., lists several sightings of albino foxes in the West Country . He also records reports of huge grey fox - or wolf-like animals from Sussex: one witness, Doris Metcalf, said " I thought it was a large *Alsatian* dog…"

Such sightings are not confined to the countryside. Lucian Freud,the artist, saw an unusually large fox in London; in his own words,

"Once I was walking up one of the side roads around here when I saw a very large dog-fox in front of me,so big that it looked as if it might have been mixed with a bit of *Alsatian*. There were *grey bits on it too"* (Martin Gayford, *Man With A Blue Scarf: On Sitting For A Portrait By Lucian Freud* (2010), (p .205).

Oxford zoologist Peter Macdonald, on p.96f. of his *Field Guide To The Mammals of Britain and Europe* (1993), states: "Occasionally reported…are white Red Foxes…which are superficially similar to the white morph of the Arctic Fox. Very occasional occurrence of specimens lacking guard hairs, thus appearing woolly, called Samson foxes. Eyeshine in torchlight generally blue or white, but *reddish if viewed at an angle…"*

Remember what the female witness said: "Eyes red and glowing…staring at us sideways."

I propose what the couple saw was a doubly,perhaps triply unusual fox,outsized,albino, and possibly Samson (hence its disordered coat), simply going about its business in unusual light conditions. The fact the man died later in the year was a tragic coincidence.

I`ve not got it in for the Bords,by the way: I absolutely love their anthologies,and they were the first people, along with John Keel, who really kindled my interest in Fortean subjects.

A battle between cannon and a river monster in Iowa in 1885

Kansas City Star

January 10th 1885

A Huge River Reptile or Animal Captured in the Skunk River Near Oskaloosa, IA

The wildest excitement ever known in Iowa, amounting almost to frenzy, now prevails on Skunk river, near Oskaloosa. The excitement began Tuesday,and there are now several hundred persons there and many others hurrying to the scene. Early Tuesday morning, Mr James Wright, living a few miles from Oskaloosa, rode into town and informed the city authorities of what he had seen at his farm. His statements, which were subsequently in the main verified, were as follows:

His farm is situated four or five miles from the city, on the south bank of the river. His feed lot, in which ten days ago there were about one hundred large hogs, is situated about eight rods at nearest point to the river. During the last twenty days ten of his largest hogs, weighing from 250 to 400 pounds, disappeared. The fence was new and made of native lumber, with posts every six feet; also a trusty bull dog slept four rods from the lot; and as there was no evidence that the fence had been touched or the dog roused, the mystery surrounding the missing hogs was becoming darker each day. Last night he, armed with a Henry rifle and his dog by his side, from a partially concealed spot watched the pen or lot. Nothing whatever was seen during the night, and nothing heard but violent splashing in the river. Just as the sun rose,and as he was in the act of starting home, there came from the river up over the bank,and slowly moving toward the hog lot ,

A GIGANTIC ANIMAL OR REPTILE

large enough and hideous enough to appal the strongest man. And had not subsequent measurements verified his estimates of size,length,etc, those

having heard his excited statements would have still believed that his exaggerations resulted from fear. It approached the pen in which the hogs were kept more slowly than it approached from the river, and carried its feet several feet above the fence until about fifteen to twenty feet of its head and body was beyond the fence when,with a quick descent of the head, a hog weighing at least 300 pounds was

GRASPED IN THE MOUTH OF THE MONSTER

The entire hog disappeared in the mouth, except the head,which projected out of the side of the animal`s mouth about fifteen inches from the tip of the nose. It then turned around without seeming to move its hind legs or tail, carrying its head at least twelve or fifteen feet high, its fore legs not touching the ground during the time it was getting over the fence. It then ran down the river bank fifteen or twenty rods, and plunged into the water. He estimated the entire length to be 78 feet; the distance from the fore legs to the end of the nose at eighteen feet; the distance between the fore and hind legs at forty feet;and the tail at twenty feet. Its legs were three feet long and as thick as a man`s body. Its body was from four to five feet in diameter, making the animal when walking about seven or eight feet high. Although no one believed his statements accurate, all believed that some wonderful animal had been seen and that it had carried a large hog into the river. The report spread rapidly and in one hour forty or fifty men on horseback and several hundred on foot were hurrying to the Wright farm. The animal was first seen a mile below the farm. Several shots were fired into him which produced no other effect than to cause him to approach the bank slowly and unexcitedly, but when within ten or fifteen feet of the bank

SUDDENLY HE MADE A LUNGE

And grasped by the head and neck a horse rode by Wm. Smith, and jerked with such force as to carry him into the river, and so deep did his tooth go that the flesh was mangled and the neck bone exposed in many places back to the body. Wm. T.Smith was only saved from being carried in with the horse by being caught by the arm and held by John Aikin, who was riding near him. The animal then plunged into the middle of the river, and it was apparent from the commotion in the water (and his body was seen every few rods) that he was going down stream rapidly. Every man with gun or revolver at every opportunity fired at him. The numbers increased so that at 12 o`clock there were two thousand following his

movements. The firing along the bank became so frequent and reckless or perhaps thoughtless, that it seemed like a battlefield. Neither the roar of musketry nor the impact of bullets against his body seemed to disturb him. By this time it became apparent that revolver and rifle balls would not penetrate his body, as it was roughly estimated that up to 3 p.m ten thousand shots had been fired, without even having infuriated him. At this time Al. Swalm, of Oskaloosa, directed two men to make the best possible time to town and

BRING A 12 POUND CANNON

a keg of railroad spikes and plenty of powder. The cannon arrived at 4 p.m. Capt Wilber, who commanded the Twenty-third Indiana battery through the Atlanta campaign, took command of the gun. It was heavily loaded with powder and railroad spikes,and put in position covering the river at a shoal a half mile below,and all waited impatiently the result. At twenty minutes past 5

THE HUGE RIVER REPTILE

Exposed a large part of his body in crossing the shoal, when at a distance of thirty-eight feet the cannon was fired. Even before the roar of the gun had died away in the distance, a piteous wail,or groan,loud and long, came from the water;the head and tail lashed the water furiously; the water near the middle of the animal was seen to be deeply tinged with blood. In a few minutes

ALL MOTION HAD CEASED

And it could be seen that the railroad spikes had taken effect just behind the foreleg, and that a large stream of blood gushed from the wound. A ditching team, consisting of twelve yoke of oxen, were a mile distant. They were brought, and chains were thrown around its head and it was drawn upon the river bank. Al Swalm and Dr. Huntsman made accurate measurements, which are as follows: Entire length from end of tail to tip of nose, 81 feet; from the forelegs to tip of nose,19 feet; body, from fore to hind legs,40 feet;its tail 20 feet. Its heart weighed 80 pounds and had four cavities,and was pronounced by Huntsman to be heart of

AN AIR BREATHING ANIMAL

and not a reptile. The lungs and all the other organs seemed like the viscera of animals. It was found that none of the bullets had penetrated the skin. It was skinned ,and it will be sent to the Academy of Natural Science,at Philadelphia. The flesh is being carefully removed from the skeleton, which is to be properly wired and kept for the present at Oskaloosa on exhibition.

DR PECK,OF DAVENPORT

Arrived in response to a telegram,Wednesday morning. After a very careful examination,he said: “Gentlemen, this is no Cardiff giant, but a veritable animal or reptile, but as I am neither a naturalist or paleontologist, I have only to say that it probably belongs to a species of gigantic lizard supposed to have been extinct many thousand years.” Pointing to one of the teeth, he said “ I will give fifty dollars for that canine tooth” which was found on measurement to be seventeen and a half inches long.”

Location of Iowa. Wikipedia Creative Commons.

Pretty Flamingo - Encounters with British Flamingoes

Bob Skinner and I found the following information a few years ago on flamingos that have turned up in Britain:

Yorkshire Evening Post 25th September 1909 p.4

"A fine specimen of the flamingo has been shot on the mud flats between the rivers Crouch and Blackwater, Bradwell, Essex. This is the first instance a flamingo,which is found chiefly on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, being taken in Essex, although one was seen in 1873."

Chelmsford Chronicle 13th May 1910 p. 2

RARE BIRD IN THE BLACKWATER. Mr A.W.Freeman, clerk to the Maldon Rural Council, was sailing up the Blackwater on Saturday, between Tollesbury and Bradwell, when he saw a Flamingo, a very rare bird in Essex waters, overhead. The Flamingo is a large bird of pink plumage, and is very rarely seen on the English coasts."

Chelmsford Chronicle 15th August 1930, p. 7 " A flamingo was seen on the mud-flats at the mouth of the River Colne in East Mersea."

Further info on this 1930 sighting:

Chelmsford Chronicle,5 September , 1930 p,7

FLAMINGO IN ESSEX

"The appearance of the flamingo in the mouth of the river at East Mersea as recorded by Mr L Temple, appears to have been explained by the escape of such a bird kept at Lowestoft by Mr M.L. Powell. The flamingo has been seen in Essex from time to time,but,as Mr W.E.Glegg,F.Z.S the eminent ornithologist states, "there can be little doubt that the birds seen were escapes." It is on such flats as those of the Essex coast that the flamingo finds its favourite food, and it has been seen thus feeding near Tollesbury in May, 1910, off Bridgemarsh Island in Sept 1913, and "on the Essex coast" in 1873. A tall bird, the flamingo is distinguished by its gorgeous plumage."

The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer 23rd May 1934 p. 6

"Leeds, May 18 "GIANT BIRD" Possibly Flamingo Seen at Bridlington. Sir May not the giant bird seen at Bridlington have been a flamingo? In addition to those known to have escaped from captivity, there have been several others reported from time to time which, in all probability, were genuine wanderers from Southern Europe or Western Siberia. The size of the bird - though hardly as big as a man - roughly agrees with with that described, but probably the most corroborative evidence is that of the red wings" Undoubtedly the most outstanding feature of the flamingo in flight is the brilliant scarlet and black plumage of the under wings. The pink, black-tipped bill strongly bent: a fact which, this case, may have given rise to supposition that it was an eagle. It is hardly likely, I think,that it could have been a great bustard. In flight, this bird,at a little distance, looks white as a gull - Yours etc. H.R. Jukes, Scar village, Harrowgate."

In 2002 a flamingo was reported from Astley Moss,Greater Manchester,see www.manchesterbirding.com/flamingodoc.htm

A case from 2011:"Drama at Manchester Airport as pink flamingo closes runway. Workers at Manchester Airport were left in a flap – after a pink flamingo forced the closure of a runway.The large bird sparked a bizarre airfield drama by evading capture for almost FIVE hours.Staff at the airport's wildlife control unit called in the police and they chased the animal - nicknamed Ringo – with nets. But every time they got close to the bird it flew off, only to later return. Ringo was first spotted 'strutting down' runway two on Sunday night by airfield staff.They called for back up from police who used night vision cameras to try to locate it – but they couldn't see it.The runway was given the all-clear after the search, with airfield officials believing it had flown off.But they were stunned when it reappared at 8am on Monday morning – again confidently strolling along the second runway.Airport staff tried to scare it off in a 4x4 vehicle, specially designed to keep the airfield bird-free, but their efforts failed. Bosses then decided to shut the second runway – because Ringo was posing a danger to planes."

"Birds have the potential to bring down a jet if they are sucked into an aircraft engine and the airport decided to take no chances. The airfield team and wildlife control unit set off flares, blasted music from their vehicle and used scare tactics to try to move it away from the runway.

But their unwelcome visitor refused to go away – and they did not want to harm it so were forced to play a waiting game until it became tired. Eventually Ringo flew off at about 12.30pm, but not before giving staff the run-around for most of the morning.

Airfield workers wearing binoculars then had to spend another couple of hours on the look-out to make sure the bird hadn't come back.The origins of the flamingo remain a mystery. The airport contacted every local wildlife sanctuary but none of them reported a missing bird.Passengers spoke of the drama on micro-blogging site Twitter.Singer James Walsh, from indie band Starsailor, posted: “Flight 10 minutes late because of a flamingo on the loose. I kid you not. I'm flying from Manchester!”

A spokesman for Manchester Airport said the incident had not grounded any planes but did force the early closure of runway two.Eventually Ringo flew off at about 12.30pm, but not before giving staff the run-around for most of the morning.”

http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/drama-at-manchester-airport-as-pink-flamingo-864606

Astley Moss flamingo of 2002. Re-produced with permission of Ian McKerchar

WILD MEN IN THE PYRENEES

By Javier Resines

The great amount of testimonies gathered for centuries on the possible presence of wild men on our planet, has caused us to raise the issue that the laws of the evolution formulated by Charles Darwin for almost 180 years are not only mistaken but at least can be called into question.

Neanderthals , hybrid versions of other species, newly evolved species unknown until now by science,… who knows? The reality is that there continuously arrives the possible news of new homínids and evidence in the form of tracks, photographs and - even - of encounters with one of these elusive creatures.

The testimonies usually arrive from the Himalayas or from remote wooded zones of North America or Siberia, suitable places where sensational claims are made and where dangerous experience tells of accounts of people running into *Bigfoot.* What surely many do not know is that here, within our borders, in Spain, it is possible that we have our own particular wild man.

We are told in tens of testimonies that affirm; allowing us to speculate that the main habitat of these homínids dwellings would be located in an imaginary strip that goes from the Basque Country to the Catalan coast, through the Pyrenees, there are scatterings of encounters both sides of the border with our French neighbour. The Pyrenees contain quaternary glaciers located more to the south of Europe, forests that have not yet been trod by the foot of man, perpetual snows and, in certain zones, an intricate network of underground galleries which would allow the existence of small isolated communities,affluent and adapted to the land and of the civilization in the mountain range that seems to hide an enigmatic treasure in form of *pie-grande* in its valleys and mountains, a small redoubt of beings who have fallen away from the main trend of evolution.

Basque country. The history of *Basajaun.*

We began looking for the tracks of our particular wild man in the Counties of Vasco and Navarre, where it is known with its own name, *Basajaun*, the gentleman of the forest.

It is described as a man or a species of gigantic simian; hairy and very agile of stature. Equipped with great physical force, one says that - on occasions - their feet have a more or less circular form, resembling the hooves of calves. It is not described as dangerous to man, rather the opposite: it has a generally amiable character.

The shepherds - legend says that its presence is known because the cattle make the sound of cowbells chiming in unison, signalling that they can rest in peace, because the spirit of the wild man will keep guard and rest. Basque folklore also attributes to this being the transmission to men of the secrets of agriculture, iron work and the construction of certain utensils, like the mountain range and the mill, among other advances. In addition, it also seems to have certain powers of controlling the forces of the nature, as if it was a supernatural being.

Up to here this is a fable, historical stories that grandparents tell their perplexed grandsons. But we wonder to ourselves if *Basajaun* could have been, or still is, a real creature. Or, on the contrary, is it only an invented figure to explain in a fantastic way how strangers invented man-made things, like the birth of agriculture, for example?A detailed description and its similarity with some ancestors of modern man have made people think of some heterodox wild men that have a real basis in existence. On occasions, reality surpasses fiction, we must not forget . *Basajaun* could be a memory of a time at which they existed as Neanderthals living in the Basque Country. We know they co-existed with *Homo sapiens* for about 10,000 years. It is possible that the old inhabitants of the Cantabrian cornice had seen and coexisted - in some way - with that race. One would be a human group to which they would be considered to be superior, as much by its physical strength as by its abilities, as thus they seem to demonstrate the archaeological findings that have been discovered.

The Neanderthals disappeared thirty or forty thousand years ago, coinciding with the invasion of populations of *homo sapiens* coming from Africa. One of the last redoubts of the Neanderthal was, indeed, the peninsular North zone and the Pyrenees. Is the origin legend of *Basajaun* in the cultural interchange between Neanderthals and homo sapiens? And still further…is it possible that some Neanderthal group has been able to survive until more or less recent time? We know that the question is very controversial.

Fig 1 .Ideal representation of
the Basajaun and Basandere

Fig 2 The Yeti of Irun 2011

The first half of the past 20th century surprised us with some testimonies on encounters with this homínid. Thus, in 1920, the Basque anthropologist Jose Miguel assured us that there was *basajaun* in the neighbourhood of Azkoaga, in the province of Guipúzcoa. Years later, the anthropologist and Navarrese ethnographer Jose Maria Satrústegui gathered several cases in his book *Myths and Beliefs*. In this work it narrates how several shepherds of Valcar and Ondarrola affirmed that they had seen it. Also an old agriculturist told him that these beings used to go to their small village in Aitzurre, although for a long time he had not seen them. Other testimonies confirmed the sighting by him of a young member of this species in the entrance of the cave of Mailuxe. Curiously the small being - who was dozing in the sun had very blond hair. In the last years, a spurt again of the interest in *basajaun* occurred due to the supposed presence of this type of being in very recent times has taken place. Thus, in April of 2011, two hikers (father and daughter) took a walk by the rough wooded place of Arkitutza when - about 200 meters in the distance they saw something that called for their attention. At the outset they thought that it was a dog,a person, a monkey or even a bear despite those disappearing from the area for a century.

But what witnesses saw everywhere was a hairy man , he wore"*a kind of fur poncho"* moving at incredible speed running uphill while emitting loud whistles. These sounds, long and sustained, seemed to be answered from a hill nearby and also from the surrounding woods. After a couple of minutes, the being known as the *Yeti of Irun* disappeared without a trace ..

Fig 3 Footprint found in Aralar 2011

Fig 4. Construction on the path crossing at Espierba. (Photo property of Florent Barrere)

Fig 5. Details of path construction. (Photo property of Florent Barrere)

Earlier in March, and relatively close to the Aralar Park area, a trail in the snow was photographed composed of three large footprints made by a bare foot ...with only four fingers! Basajaun? Bears? Pranksters?

The Western Pyrenees. The *Peña Montañesa* and the French expeditions to Irati and Bielsa

We leave the *half magic* world of the *Basajaun* and continue our particular search for the wild man in the direction of the Aragonese and Navarran Pyrenees. There, between peaks and valleys, we collect testimonies of encounters with beings that seem to be very close to our *humanity,* much more than any other known hominid can be.

One of the paradigmatic cases of contact with savages in these parts occurred on May 4, 1993 in the area known as Peña Montañesa in Huesca. That day, a group of six woodcutters found a strange creature 1.70 meters high which had a friendly attitude towards them.

As Manuel told reporters Cazcarra, one of the workers, the group was cutting trees when "*at around 15:45 hours, suddenly I heard screams, shrill cries that resembled those of the wild goats. We think that some of these animals could have fallen off a cliff and went to see what had happened. And when I saw the wild man, he was perched in a pine tree clinging to a branch with his hands and feet. He cried. The distance that separated us from the creature was of about 90 meters. I called my colleagues to come and see and the first thing he did was Ramiro Lopez, who arrived in time to see how being descended from the tree to hide behind a large bush. The rest of my classmates also they arrived but unfortunately they could not see. However, they had to avoid going to a log them certainly thrown violently by the ape-man.* "

A wild man in Huesca? Cazcarra and his companions were accustomed to seeing bears and all sorts of animals in the area, but what they saw that day was unlike anything they knew. When the main witness of the event was asked if he had noticed anything strange or other signs in the following days, he replied that "*a few days later it was found that the window of one of our Land Rover`s was broken, a few days ago, a caterpillar truck had been half destroyed. "*

Days later, a patrol of the Civil Guard, found strange footprints on the ground that looked like they had been left by a small bare foot. Although they could not determine what animal it belonged to, the official version

Fig 6. Simiot image at church of Sant Saveur, in Arles, France.

Fig 7. Painting of Simiot in the reliquary of the Abbey of St. Mary, in Arles, France

established that they were caused by a bear of a near natural reserve…

The fact is that in the same area and just a year later, in late spring 1994, the witness Juan Ramon Ferrer also found something surprising that occurred, a being described as an ape-man small, endowed with long arms, which emitted a strong odour and who was also perched on a tree. Was it the same man on both occasions?

It was precisely the knowledge of the case of Peña Montañesa which encouraged a group of French explorers led by Florence and Philippe Barrère and Jean Luc Coudray, brothers ,to search for evidence that could prove the existence of wild men in the Franco-Aragonese Pyrenees . The expedition organized several incursions between August 2007 and October 2009, collecting interesting facts both in the area of Bielsa, Huesca, and in the forest Irati.

Irati is a large wooded area covering an area of approximately 20,000 hectares located between France and Spain, although 90% of its territory is in Navarre territory. It is the largest beech forest in Europe, an almost untouched and sparsely populated place that became part of the history of cryptozoology back in 1774, when the engineer of the French Navy David Leroy learned of the existence of a curious being tall, hairy like a bear, about thirty years old, cheerful and of good character who lived in the forest. But probably it was not a wild child raised among animals, a kind of Kaspar Hauser of the Pyrenees, but curious nonetheless.

In August 2007, Florence Barrere was in this forest scouting locations for a short film project about the hunt for chamois when he and his companions could hear a cry of unusual power for approximately sixty seconds and that it was repeated five minutes later. It was a half-human sound, similar to those heard in various parts of North America that have been attributed to Bigfoot.

Encouraged by this, they returned to the place up to three more times in search of new evidence. They did not hear the dreaded cry but what they found was surprising. In July 2008 they discovered the entrance to a cave (whose entrance was concealed with beech leaves) in the Uthurkokotcha, an ideal place for the survival of wild men because of their special situation of isolation and its known network of underground galleries .

As we mentioned, Montañesa Peña served as a trigger to the French researchers to try even harder, spotting the potential wild man of the Pyrenees. With this in mind, the brothers Coudray Bielsa visited the area twice, in the summers of 2008 and 2009. Bielsa is a small town located at the entrance to the valley of Monte Perdido in the province of Huesca. In this case, we are also in an area of very low population density, in a typical Pyrenean valley wet woods with leafy trees and shrubs mixed with conifers.

The Coudray brothers located a series of bizarre constructions made with tree branches along the road linking the municipalities of Bielsa Espierba. This is, obviously, artificial structures in the form of a cross, with many braids, not to have been formed by chance, similar to those found in various parts of North America and Siberia and attributed to *Bigfoot and Almas.* A year later, when they returned to the area, the buildings were gone, but they found new ones, star-shaped, very rough, which also were strange to them.

But what caught their attention was the discovery of a series of footprints around Espierba, which only increased the possibility of a fantastic encounter with the unknown. The trail would correspond to a bipedal animal, walking barefoot, possessing a great stride, and estimated to be of considerable stature. What creature could have left traces that unusual? An unknown hominid? A hiker wanting a joke? Disturbing.

Catalonia Simiots and new Nonells

Catalan geography is especially conducive to magic, for imagination, for the fantastic ... and there would be less trouble in relating to the possible presence of wild men on their land. Here it has also been known for centuries and the presence of "simiots nonells"as the local version of Bigfoot. To start talking about Simiots we enter just ten kilometers into our neighboring country, right on the opposite side of Girona`s Pyrenees. There, in the French town of Arles-sur-le Tec, the news about the existence of these beings dates back to the distant 10th Century. According to tradition, the creature is described as like a monkey, a sort of hybrid between ape and man, with horns, finishing with hooves or clawed feet, very hairy and certainly unpleasant.

They made their appearance in the Roussillon and the Tec valley around the year one thousand, attacking the local population in the midst of a time of severe calamities such as drought and fearsome hail. Apparently, hundreds of farmers especially children-were kidnapped and eaten by these terrible things.

In this situation, Arnulfo, the abbot of Arles, came to Rome for help. He was received by the Pope John XII and returned to the town with the relics of the saints Abdon and Senen whose very presence according to tradition succeeds in fighting off the beasts.

Arles still survives in the footsteps of the distant presence of simiots, remembered with a street in his honour located behind the church of Santa Maria. At the front door of this church, founded in 778, we can also see two of these beings carved in stone devouring several children. Inside, in one of the closets that keeps the relic of the patron saints of the town, it is also dated in the XVI century painting depicting a strange being bipedal being taken for Simiot.

The Santa Maria is not the only graphic evidence of the existence of these ape-men. In the churches of Saint-Sauveur d'Arles and Saint-André and Sant-Pere d'Albanya, in the Alt Empordà, the presence of this particular wild man is also evident in its facades and interiors.

Jesus Callejo the writer collected in his book *The Owners of Dreams* (1998) comments that the folklorist and anthropologist Joan Amades *researched in one of his works leading him to a conclusion about the contemporary nature of these creatures, "* Callejo explains that Amades knew of memories about these beings among the French peasantry of Catalonia as late as ...the late fifties of the twentieth century!"Despite the existing physical evidence that refers to encounters with these beings, renowned researcher Josep M. Armengou favours a closer look at a legendary explanation.

In his opinion, the simiot may be a modern version of two very old myths rooted in Catalonia, known as the home of the molsa (man moss) and the home of the escorga (man bark), two divinities of the forests and mountains. As we see, there are opinions for all tastes ...

To end this quick review about *Catalan wild men* we can not fail to mention the new Nonell, the Abominable Snowman of Ripollés and Cerdanya

valley. Some elders still remember having heard stories about this being, large and covered with white hair, who has been seen wandering the high peaks and reminiscent, in many of its habits, of the Basque basajaun.

Relatively close in time, and strongly related to the Simiots to which we have referred, we know of several apelike beings who were exhibited in several European cities during the second half of the eighteenth century. In 1760, one of these animals was captured in the region of Vallespir and exhibited in various markets of Catalonia. It was known as the satyr Barcelona. There exists two references about this unusual fact: in the Russian magazine *Moskowskia Vedmosti,* of July 11, 1760, and the other in the *Encyclopedic and universal newspaper*, in which number of August 1, 1760 you can read: *"We ensure that recently there came to Barcelona a foreign species showing a satyr whose complexion is between brown and brown. His head, forehead and black eyes. His eyebrows are like a man and has ears like a tiger. (...) The cheeks are scarlet. We see a white moustache like a cat and a lion's mouth, which is not at all teeth, but a kind of whetstone with a goatee. His arms are like those of a man, but covered with hair up to his hands. (...) The rest of the body is also covered with hair of different colours. (...). Its size is 1.60 metres it lives on bread and milk. "* Apparently, from the description that comes from the poor creature, we could find ourselves an elderly wild man specimen.

More recently, meetings with strange hominids have also occurred relatively frequently. Thus, on February 26, 1968, there was a curious case in the Catalan town of Vilobí d'Onyar, in the region of La Selva. The American writer and journalist John A. Keel (famous for his research on the *Mothman)* picks up the story in his book ` *Strange Creatures from Time and Space.* ` Keel tells the story of a vision frightened children had in observing a species of ape and at large in the vicinity of the town,the creature also was viewed by several people at later dates.

According to the next day`s edition of the newspaper *Arriba* he picked up on February 27, *"the animal was drinking in a pond near the house of witnesses. It fled, leaving in the clay soil a number of large footprints of forty centimeters long and similar to those of a plantigrade. These steps are consistent with the description given by the rider Roberto Juver who said he had seen-some days ago, near Hostalrich- an animal with a large, furry body and long arms, crossing the road ahead of him, walking wearily.*

The newspaper said that neither zoos nor circuses nearby had missed any animal that could have led to any confusion. In the region some panic ensued and mass searches were carried out with the usual negative results, as expected.

In the nineties the story of a group of speleologists who encountered a being of simian appearance in the ruins of the church of Coll de Girona Vallgrassa spread. *Year Zero* magazine, in its issue of February 1994, covered the story that the incident happened in June the previous year. The strange creature, very hairy and a half meter tall, was seen when it ran inside the temple, making great leaps, until it hid in the foliage of the forest. According to witnesses, the man uttered strange cries like a cat`s angry roars.

Shortly thereafter, a family which was on a leisurely trip by car found itself faced with something unusual. Near the French town of Prats de Mollo (located just six kilometers from the Spanish border) they could see a figure like a monkey crossing the road with confidence.

Years later, in April 1999, local press dubbed the *yeti Las Gavarres;* a humanoid being who appeared repeatedly in this area of the province of Gerona. As reported by the investigator Miguel G. Aracil in his *Catalonia, chronicles of mysteries* he chronicles the mystery creature in question which caused the death of several dozen goats and sheep in the region. The field research led by Aracil, led him to collect data which caused him to lean more to the hypothesis of the presence of chupacabras in the area of the unknown hominid.

Do Neanderthals in small concentrations coexist with modern man? In search of another humanity.

We know that the question is hopelessly unscientific and that more than one person will be taking his hands to his head at this time. The truth is that the so-called *Neanderthal hypothesis*, although not shared by everyone is in good health among the followers of the phenomenon.

When referring to the possible origin of Basajaun we already mentioned that until about 35,000 years ago, Spain and much of Europe, Asia and North Africa were inhabited by *Homo neanderthalensis.* The pressure from other species relegated him in the evolutionary process making him disappear, but perhaps they didn`t at all. Just maybe, they managed to adapt to more isolated and less palatable habitats by competitors.

Do not forget that the orographic conditions of some areas of our country (mountainous areas, mainly) made possible the survival of animals that had disappeared in the rest of Europe for millennia..

The existence of a small Neanderthal (or *gigantopithecus,* one of the most rational explanations that could be behind some types of large yeti) strongholds would, without doubt,be the most exciting news possible, the encounter with a different kind of humanity that today reigns on our planet.

Indeed, the premise of the survival of a large hominid up to the present time is used as a starting point for the authors of `*Homo Orcus, a second humanity`,* a fake documentary filmed by the French film directors Patrick Eric Audinet and Glotin in 2011.

The film was part of a really unusual idea: the alleged encounter with a different humanity to ours and the consequences of any kind that this would cause. Tellingly, its creators have taken as the core of their work histories and stories circulating for centuries about the supposed existence of hominids who inhabit the Pyrenees (both on the French and Spanish side) and other wooded areas of Europe.

Again, everything in the film is false .... but very interesting. A kind of science fiction that also makes us reflect on how we should treat new potential animals that science discovers in the future. Especially if they have traces of *humanity* like ours …

Photographs

1. Idealized images of Basajaun and Basandere

2. Photo of the so-called Yeti of Irun, 2011

3. Footprint found in Aralar, 2011

4. Construction on the path crossing at crossing- Espierba (Photo property of Florent Barrere)

5. Details of path construction (Photo property of Florent Barrere)

6. Simiot image at church of Sant Saveur, in Arles, France.

7. Painting of Simiot in the reliquary of the Abbey of St. Mary, in Arles, France

8. The Satyr of Barcelona, 1760

Fig 8 The Satyr of Barcelona, 1760.

Two Epigrams in Greek about Marine Cryptids

Richard George

The first writers we might consider Fortean were Callimachus, a celebrated poet who worked in the library at Alexandria in the 3rd century B.C and his contemporary Bolus, who both wrote catalogues of *paradoxa* or *thaumasia* ("wonders"). Regrettably neither work has survived. Subsequent exponents included Antigonus, Archelaus and Philostephanus. The latter two, like Callimachus, were poets:and paradoxography entered the Palatine Anthology (abbreviated to *Anth.Pal*) a collection of epigrams in Greek so called because the sole manuscript was found in the Count Palatine library at Heidelberg.

Several of these poems would make *Fortean Times Strange Deaths* :there are two about fishermen choked by their catches (*Anth Pal.* 7.504, 7.702) , and two on decapitations by ice *(Anth Pal* . 7.542, 9.56). My own favourite describes a man climbing a rope to collect a honeycomb. Honey gushes onto the rope, which one of his dogs greedily severs, sending him to his grave. (*Anth.Pal* 7.622). There are also two about miraculous healing (*Anth.Pal* 6.203, 9.46).

Cryptoceanography is not my strong suit, so I`ll just present the two texts that are the subject of this article. The first, *Anth Pal* 6. 222, is by Theodoridas (3rd century B.C.).

The ocean, lashed by Orion skies,

washed onto the rocks of Iapygia

A thousand-footed scolopendra.

Captains of twenty-oared galleys

Laden deep dedicated to their gods

The gigantic rib of this terrible monster.

Iapygia is in Southern Italy: Orion in those latitudes rose in late summer,and was bad sea conditions.

The poem is frustratingly unspecific (but note "rib"). Is the monster (1) purely mythical; (2) an artefact of decomposition; or (3) are we in Heuvelmans territory, with a creature new to us?

This epigram may be why the name *scolopendra* is given to centipedes!

The second text, *Anth. Pal.* 6.223, from two or three centuries later, is by one of two authors named Antipater.

Hermonax, hauling in

His fisherman`s catch, found on the sand

The remains of a wandering scolopendra,

Long as eight spans of a man`s arms

Outstreatched left to right, putrid with foam,

Gutted by reefs. He presented it

To Ino and her son Palaemon,

Offering gods of the sea one of their monsters

This again is enigmatic. The length is 30-50 feet: note "wandering", nomadic.

In more recent times, *scolopendra* was " A fabulous sea-fish which feeling himselfe taken with a hooke casteth out his bowels vntill hee hath vnloosed the hooke and then swalloweth them vp again" (Bullokar, *English Expositour* (1616), quoted in Jonathan Green, *A Dictionary Of Slang* (1998), p. 1037. This behaviour, as far as I know, is not attested in classical accounts.

In 17th century vernacular, a *scolopendra* was a kind of prostitute (Green ibid), probably one specialising in oral sex (because sea-monsters swallow you). If so, there is an interesting modern parallel: *chupacabras,* "goat-sucker", is also, I recall Jonathan Downes saying, the term given to that category of prostitute in Puerto Rico!

Australian Moas and a New Zealand Gorilla

Ulrich Magin

In the 19th century, amateur naturalists supplied newspapers with a steady stream of botanical, zoological and historical information, much of which is a mine for unusual and even Fortean reports. I have here collected three newspaper accounts of animals in rather unexpected regions – of moas in Australia and New Zealand, and of sightings of a bigfoot-type animal in New Zealand.

The Moa of Victoria, Australia

The Moa of Victoria was big news in Australia in 1864, although it was not a living, but only a fossil bird:

"The Moa in Victoria. — A member of Macmillan's exploring party, in the Gripps Land Ranges, writes as follows: — "Of course you have heard of the moa-moa of New Zealand, by inspecting one bone of which Professor Owen was enabled to judge of the general appearance of the *Dinornis*, or gigantic extinct bird of New Zealand, and the scientific correctness of his conclusions were afterwards confirmed by the discovery of other remains. We were startled at our encampment, on the 22nd, by the arrival of Mr. Macmillan and Mr. Jones, from the Dargo — whither they had been engaged in searching for a suitable spur down which, if required, to take a track to the Dargo — as they brought with them the skull of some enormous bird, but slightly decayed, evidently not dead more than three years, and bearing a strong resemblance to the description generally given of the skull of the *Dinornis*, measuring sixteen inches long by seven or eight broad. Some of the party pronounced it to be the skull of an enormous pelican, but I am inclined to believe that it is the skull of the moa-moa; and whether that great bird is extinct or not remains, I opine, yet to be determined, by the adventurous explorers who may push their way over the great plateau of the main dividing range. This relic will be forwarded to the Honourable the Commissioner of Railways and Roads." [1]

Australia actually had a giant flightless bird too, "considerably larger than the emu or cassuary", the *mihirung* or Dromornis, which had "many features in common with the moa". Yet, the Dromornis was most certainly not alive in the early 1860s. According to palaeontologists, it died out some 6 million years ago, although one expert on the moa, Barney Brewster, claims that there is even evidence of co-existence with man, such as petroglyphs in a rock shelter at Pimba, South Australia. [2]

The Moa in New Guinea?

This Moa was not seen or found, only surmised. In a lengthy treatise on the moa of New Zealand, the Rev. G. Smales comments on a paper by the well-known zoologist Colenso who had expressed his somewhat unexpected opinion that the moa was not a real animal, but a Maori myth, pertaining to their mythical homeland, Hawaiki. Samles refutes this by pointing out that nit one, but – at his time – "not less than 25 or 26 different species" of moa had been excavated in both the North and South Island New Zealand. Smales continues to list some recent discoveries of moa bones, as well as half a dozen sightings of the creature or its prints.

He then quotes Rev. Richard Taylor: "The dinornis may be discovered in New Guinea and other islands in the same line to the north of New Zealand." [3]

While Smales was certainly correct in defending the moa of his native island, there has been no further suggestion that it may exist on New Guinea also.

The New Zealand Bigfoot

A gorilla was first seen, than captured or allegedly captured, in 1870 in New Zealand. This is the confusing story which gibes the cryptozoologist the luxury of two definite identifications!

The first hint of the animal appeared in a brief newspaper note at the end of September: "Messrs. Small and Curtis have gone to Porter's Creek to bring over the Maori gorilla, of which there has been so much talk lately." [4]

A search of the paper for earlier mentions has failed, but soon after, the creature was reportedly caught: "'DISCOVERY OF THE MISSING LINK. The *Thames Advertiser* of the 27th ult. gives the following account of a discovery:—We have been informed that an extraordinary animal has been captured at Porter's Creek on Wharekawa, and is at present in keeping there. We sincerely hope that it will be brought over here soon because we confess that the description we have heard is somewhat staggering,to say the least

This animal was caught in a swamp by dogs; the legs, or arms and legs, were tied, and it was lodged in a vacant room in Mr Baker's store. And now for the description. The Maori gorilla has, it is stated; a head somewhat like a native, but two tusks stick out, one on each side of the head. There is a large tuft of hair on the top of the head. The body is as dark as that of a Maori, with hair on the arms and legs. He grunts somewhat like a pig. So far for the description. The animal is apparently miscellaneous enough in his feeding; for we are informed that he eats potatoes, pie crusts, and nuts. We are informed that he is to be brought over here for public exhibition, and we must say we should like to see him. Since writing the above we have received some further, and in some part, contradictory particulars. The animal, or monster, has been living with the natives for a long time, although it is now, as stated above, in the keeping of Mr Baker. It would almost appear that, the famous "missing link" has been discovered at last. The natives say that it is a hundred years old, and that it is a "tupuna" or ancestor. Thus it seems they are not so proud as we are, who do not care about believing that we are descended from monkeys. These natives are not prejudiced, and the learned Professors Huxley and Darwin would hail them as men after their own hearts. Two gentlemen were yesterday over at Wharekawa, and offered a pretty large sum for this animal which is to decide the development theory, but the negotiation for its possession is not concluded." [5]

Would anyone believe that one could mistake a seal for a bigfoot? If the earlier report hinted at the "gorilla" being simply an old Maori, the next suggested just that: "THE MAORI GORILLA. The strange animal reported to have been found at Porter's Creek, on the other side of the river, we were informed last night by some natives that it is simply a seal. Whether the person who brought the first news of its being caught had never seen such an animal before, or could not resist the opportunity for drawing upon his imagination, we cannot say certain it is that the animal has very little resemblance to the monster it was represented to be. —*Thames Evening Star*." [6]

If the creature had tusks, as stated in the other reports, it may have been a walrus – but a walrus in New Zealand would probably be as absurd as a gorilla!

One day later, the "Gorilla" is, again, an old Maori: "THE MAORI GORILLA. We are sorry to disappoint our readers, more especially with reference to any interesting question in natural history, but it now appears that the reported Maori gorilla is no gorilla at all. In point of fact, the Maori gorilla turns out to be an old woman. Professor Huxley must therefore wait for some time for the confirmation of the development theory by the discovery of the "missing link." We cannot give him any assistance. The statements which found their way to the public on this subject give but a faint idea of the wild rumours afloat in the town on the matter. We understand that two gentlemen went over to get this most notable creature for public exhibition, and after a long walk came to the place where she was kept. There they were shown a poor old woman, who really, in some respects, is as great a curiosity as the gorilla itself would be. She has been as she is, it seems, beyond the memory of all who know her, and has attained, it is said, the patriarchal age of 175. How this estimate has been arrived at we do not know, and so cannot guarantee its correctness. Her hair has dropped off, except a small tuft at the top, and, altogether, she is such a wonder that the gentlemen who went to buy a gorilla would willingly have made terms for her if her relations had permitted. – *Advertiser*." [7]

Notes

1. *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 28 April 1864, p. 3; *Otago Daily Times*, 12 April 1864, p. 4 [name of explorer is written M'Millan, and source given as Melbourne *Argus*, 5 April 1864]; *Otago Witness*, 16 April 1864
2. Barney Brewster: *Te Moa*. Nikau Press, Nelson 1987, p. 24
3. The Moa, *Bruce Herald*, 5 June 1894, p. 1
4. *Auckland Star*, 28 September 1870, p. 2
5. *Wanganui Herald*, 1 October 1870, p. 2; *North Otago Times*, 14 October 1870, p. 3
6. *Auckland Star*, 30 September 1870, p. 2
7. *Auckland Star*, 1 October 1870, p. 2

HORSE-SHOE CRAB IN A CHINESE SEWER

The images are from a Chinese language web-site.

This translation is straight from Google Translate.

Xingsha a residential property in the office, the reporter saw the "Monster": like a crab shell, but divided into two, which is like a lobster claws have a full ten most strange thing is also behind long tail . This "monster" of about 30 cm long, 25 cm wide, and weighs about 1 kg. According to district cleaner old introduction, when he was in the area that morning sewer cleaning, found this Hawaii, a scooped found claws and tails also are moving. Tang said the master, he had never seen such a strange fish, I feel very strange, then filled with a basin into the property management office.

Community remove such a strange thing, causing many residents came to see fresh, some residents also have come up with a mobile phone camera and sent via MMS to consult friends and acquaintances. But no one had ever seen the presence of this "monster." Some speculated that it is a kind of marine life, but did not have any nearby seafood restaurant. After the reporter online access to relevant information, understand that this "monster" named horseshoe crab (hòu), are arthropods door, commonly known as the three stab horseshoe crab, two in-laws, sea monsters, both because of its looks like a crab like shrimp, so people also called "horseshoe crab" is a kind of trilobites (now only fossil) as old animals. Horseshoe crabs come from 400 million years ago and still retains its original historic appearance, so Limulus a "living fossil". Horseshoe crab meat edible and delicious, even more interesting is that the horseshoe crab blood is blue, a case of bacteria on solidification, which is widely used in medical and food industry, as a test of whether the bacterial agents. Horseshoe crab belonging to marine life. How Limulus only across the oceans, drill the sewer district, the presence of people who did not say where.

†

Diligently study the Thoughts of Chairman Devo-tse-tung!

Comrades,Workers,read Flying Snake!

SOME ANIMAL CURIOSITIES FROM THE EARLY 19th Century

Ulrich Magin

In an Almanac published in Austria, by Karl Joseph Jurende (24 April 1780 to 10 January 1842), and called „Jurende's Mährischer Wanderer. Ein National-Kalender für alle Provinzen des Kaiserstaates Oesterreich", we find, in vol. 24, 1834, p. 213-214, a small paper titled is: "Erinnerung an merkwürdige Ereignisse in der Thierwelt" which lists just what it says. About 80 per cent of the entries concern conventional creatures, but there are several cryptozoological and fortean notes:

"Recollections of unusual and noteworthy events in the animal world.
1816. In August, at a depth of 10 ft below ground in the garden of the attendent of Westminster, there was found, in a solid rock, a living salamander and a living toad.

1824.

– November to April. Lake Murten [in Switzerland] looked completely red from *Oscillatoria rubens*.
– Abel describes a 7 ft tall Orang-Outang from Sumatra.
1825. 19. June. Enormous swarms of four-spotted chasers, *Libellula quadrimaculata* all over Germany and observed by Voigt afternoon at 5 pm an hour from Jena.

– The Horticultural Society of London received a hive of honey bees of a completely new species from New Holland.
– A Mr. Lyon of Bristol imports 17 living zebra.
1826. 15. June. The great sea-serpent is seen again at Georges Bank. [cf. Heuvelmans, p. 177]

1827.
– July. At Montrose masses of herring spawn rains down, it had been transported by a water spout.
– 7 November. A whale, 95 ft long, stranded near Oostende.

1828. April. Rain of herring (young offspring) in Rossshire in Scotland.

1828. April. Rain of herring (young offspring) in Rossshire in Scotland.

– May. The Natural History Society of Altenburg revceives a rat king of 25 rats which had been discovered, at Eisenberg, in a walled-up chimney.

Abel's Oran Utan sounds more like a yeti than our friendly forest man from Indonesia, but I have confirmed (see "Notizen aus dem Gebiete der Natur- und Heilkunde", vol. 21, p. 327) that a large ape Abel brought to England was regarded as a juvenile, therefore it was speculated that a second species of Orang existed which reached a height of 7 to 8 ft. Abel's report is in the "The Philosophical Magazine, Or Annals of Chemistry, Mathematics, Astronomy, Natural History and General Science", 1827, p. 213 ff. It contains the long and bloody account of the killing of an Orang Utan at "a place called Ramboom near Touraman, on the N.W. coast of Sumatra", by a white hunter: "His stature at the lowest computation was upwards of six feet; at the highest it was nearly eight; but it will afterwards be seen that it was probably about seven." Now – was this the last gigantopithecus?

Notes & Queries

A CHINESE TURTLE FALLS FROM THE SKY…AND LIFE GOES ON AS NORMAL

"OAP Fu Yiting, 63,was sitting in front of his house watching the storm in the village of Liao-cheng City in east China`s Shandong Province, when he saw the Yellow-bellied turtle plunge from the sky and land on a patch of grass.

Thinking at first it was a large rock that had been knocked off his roof, Fu was stunned to find it was a yellow-bellied slider turtle. Picking it up,he rushed inside to put it in a basin of water. The Yellow-bellied slider , which can live up to 40 years and frequently basks on shore,on logs, or while floating.Now confused Fu wants to know how this one landed in his garden. He told local media: "It makes no sense. I`ve heard of frogs falling from out of the sky during rain storms but never of a single turtle during a hailstorm. I am very curious to know what happened."

He is now waiting for experts to give him an explanation. One as yet un-proven theory is that a waterspout - a column-like vortex - carried the turtle into the air for several miles in a tornado like flight before dropping it down as the storm dispersed. Turtles are popular food in China where they often appear in soup. They are also used to make necklaces. But Fu says he will keep his turtle alive and well. "

Daily Star, 15/6/15;Metro, 16/6/15

Thanks to Bob Skinner.

A WONDER AT WALTHAMSTOW

Punch vol 30 p.49, 2 August 1856

"An interesting experiment on public curiosity was tried the other day on the British Public, by means of the following letter, which a wag, signing himself W.CLAYTON, addressed to the Times. "Sir - A

certain specimen in natural history has for the last month kept the neighbourhood of Walthamstow and Leyton, in the greatest wonder and excitement. In a pond adjoining the Lee Bridge Road, on the premises of MR F.BARCLAY where some hundreds of people have visited, has been heard, quacking similar to that of a duck.

On Saturday evening a gentleman seeing something ripple across the water, he struck it with a large stick, after which nothing further was heard. MR A.FORDHAM, who was present at the time, visited the pond at 4 o`clock on Sunday morning,and,on clearing aside some of the weeds,found,nearly dead, a fine specimen of the ornithoryneus, or duck-billed platypus, which is now in rhe possession of MR W.MORRIS, naturalist, Leyton.

We were not aware that the duck-billed platypus resembled a duck in quacking as well as in having a bill, and cannot help considering the statement to that effect, as giving the whole of the above narrative an air of quackery. A duck-billed platypus is a creature not likely to be allowed to escape from a menagerie, and still less likely to have dropped from the clouds. We are therefore inclined to regard the duck-like animal in question as that sort of duck which is generally understood by the term *canard;*a species of duck which is believed in by nobody except a goose. “

STRANGE LIZARD FOUND IN ROCKS IN VIRGINIA

Exposed by Blast, Dies Soon After;

Looks Like Iguana

November 3rd 1913

Philadelphia Inquirer.

Cumberland. Va. Nov 2nd - A lizard four feet long, supposedly of the iguana family and known only in the tropics,was unearthed by a blast yesterday at the old cement mill kilns here. The reptile was alive, but expired from the effects of the blast. How it came here and how long it was in the rock is problematical. It measures one foot five inches across the hind claws when skinned.Raymond Armbruster, who is conducting the government research work here for the Smithsonian Institution,and Edward Harrison, a botanist, pronounced the reptile a Cree lizard, Raymond Armbruster, who is conducting the government research work here for the Smithsonian Institution,and Edward Harrison, a botanist, pronounced the reptile a Cree

Lizard. It is of a green-yellow color, mottled with brown. It came to the surface when solid earth and rocks were removed.

NEW PHILIPPINES MONITOR LIZARDS

BBC Wildlife Magazine

April 2015

Enteng`s Monitor Lizard *Varanus dalubhasa*

What is it? This is one of two species of monitor lizard discovered in the Philippines after Kansas University biologists surveyed the reptiles being sold on the black market in Manila as pets, food or medicine. Both reach about 1m in length.

Where is it? *Varanus dalubhasa* is restricted to an isolated peninsula on Luzon Island - its common name honours a Filipino herpetologist, and the specific name *dalubhasa* means `skilled expert` in the Philippine Tagalog language. The other species, the Bangon monitor lizard. V.bangonorum, is found only on Mindoro Island and is named after the Bangon people who live there.

ROPEN NEAR PILLAGA AUSTRALIA

Thanks to Mike Hardcastle (extracted from longer essay.)

Date: Unknown. Whilst out exploring bushland Paul and a friend? (or cousin?) were absolutely shocked when they observed a huge bird flying close-by and above them. This bird was dinosaur-looking and absolutely huge. They could see its teeth!!! It had a wingspan similar to the size of a small truck. They had a rifle and a camera with them and Paul told the friend to shoot it and the friend replied back that he wasn`t going to shoot the thing. Paul had meant to shoot it with the camera and told him so. By the time the friend had managed to get the camera out and ready to go the bird had moved off into the distance much to their disappointment.

CURATOR FAILS TO FIND GLIDER SNAKE

June 18th 1930

"Disappointed because he failed in his search to find one of the fabled flying snakes of the Yaquis, but firmly convinced that the reptile is not a myth of native Indians, Paxon Hayes, noted reptile curator, has returned home from a two months` trip into the heart of the lower Sonora jungle.

Boa Embrace

Hayes` search for the glider snake was cut short by an accident which nearly cost him his life. While fording a small stream he was suddenly encircled about the body by a 13-foot water boa that broke two of his ribs before being knifed to death. Despite his failure this trip, Mr Hayes is convinced that the flying reptile does exist. He will return to Sonora next fall to continue his search.

The glider or flying snake , according to stories told Hayes by Yaqui chieftains, does not have wings in the regular sense of the word. Instead, when it wishes to fly from one tree to another,it puffs out its sides fanlike and glides through space[1]

Hayes` belief that the mythical snake is really existent was strengthened by the similarity of stories told him by numerous individuals who claimed they had seen it."

FLYING SNAKE IN KANSAS 1875

Elkhart Daily Review July 14th 1875

A Flying Snake

"A few weeks ago we referred to a lady living in the southern part of the city having seen a flying snake in her peregrinations through that delightful portion of the metropolis At the same time we published the statement of an aged woman, a soothsayer, who predicted that in a short time the air would be full of flying serpents. Yesterday we were met by a friend, who inquired, in an excited

[1] This is hypothesized by Nick Sucik for flying snakes also.

manner, if we had ever seen a snake that had wings, and "flew through the air with the greatest of ease?" From his statements we learn that while two boys named Remington and Jenkins, the former from this city,and the latter a Platte Countyain, were hunting in the woods, a serpent was seen approaching them, about 4 feet above the earth. Jenkins took off his hat, and,throwing it over the snake, succeeded in capturing it. It is over 1 foot long, spotted,and has wings about the size of a man`s hand. The boys have the serpent preserved in alcohol."

PINE MARTEN IN CHESHIRE IN 1978

I was given the information about this at a charity I work in, in June 2015. A man , I`ll call him `B` told me that in 1978 he and a friend of his had seen a pine marten poking its head out of a rabbit hole in the grounds of the Salasian College in Pott Shrigley, Cheshire. The place is now a hotel. The area is one of mixed coniferous and deciduous woodland.

TWELVE WALLABIES IN CHESHIRE

The same man also told me that at a secret location 3 miles from Bollington,Cheshire there existed, in June 2015, a dozen wallabies.

TWO CREATURES OF THE RHINE

E-mail from Ulrich Magin

Fitting to "Flying Snakes" name, here is an example from Germany. It comes from the work of Swiss naturalist Konrad Gesner (1516-1565) as quoted by naturalist Wilhelm Bölsche: *Drachen-Sage und Naturwissenschaft* (Stuttgard:Kosmos 1929);

"Often, dragons have been seen flying through the air in Germany, when the sun shines. Not far from Niderburg (to St. Goarat the Rhine) the inhabitants have seen in three different summers on bright days a dragon in the air which hovered there and shook its tail". (If you are fond of 500-year-old Swiss German, here is the original: " es sind auch tracken in lüfften schwe"

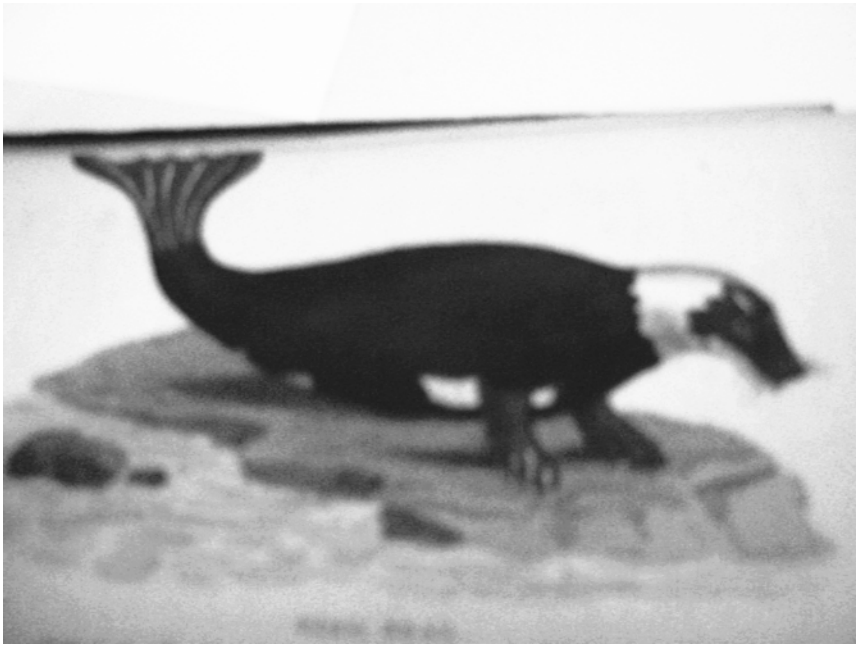
Ten schwebend offt in Theütschen landen bey Sonnenschein gesehein worden. Zu nechst bey Niderburg nit weyt von S.Guer am Rein gelegen haben die eynwohner alda drey unterschidne Sommer bey helem tag ein tracken im lufft gesehen, als wenn er hieng und den schwantz erschüttete.)"

The Rhine is famous for much exotic fauna, crocodiles, large catfish,seals, even beluga whales etc., but dragons have not been spotted there lately. However, I have one more, a giant salmon:

" A salmon, 330lbs weight, is said to have been caught by Rhine fishermen, and fowarded to Paris. It must have been very like a whale." (Tuapeka Times, 12 September 1868, p.3)

†

PIED SEAL



My notes on the above seal with a white neck, an image in The Naturalist`s Pocket Magazine…volume 2, (1799) are as follows:As extracted from a Face-book conversation:

“Pied seal. Taken near Chester, May 1766.

The Pied seal. (sorry about poor quality of my photo). A seal like this or very similar was taken nr Chester in May 1766 .Also, around 1800 seals were present in the Caspian Sea,Aral Sea, Lakes Baikal and Oron.(I seem to recall fairly recent reports of aquatic cryptids in Baikal.) Pocket Naturalist,1800,vol . 2.

2 April at 20:17

Richard Muirhead : Sorry,May 1766 not 1966

2 April at 20:19

Dale Drinnon: The seals are not Cryptids, the seals of the inland seas are known species

2 April at 21:07 Richard Muirhead : Thanks Dale

3 April at 10:14 Dale Drinnon: I had originally posted that I thought the illustration showed a ringed seal but it could also be an oddly colored grey seal and because of that I took down my suggestion.

3 April at 10:16

Richard Muirhead : Thanks

JAPAN CAT

The Naturalist`s Pocket Magazine or compleat cabinet of the curiosities and beauties of nature Volume 4 (1800)

“This beautiful animal appears to be but little known by naturalists. We find not the smallest mention of it in Buffon`s work, nor in any edition of Linnaeus. It is however, the Chat Sauvage Indien, or Indian Wild Cat of Vosmaer: and Pennant calls it, seemingly on the sole authority of this writer,the Japan Cat;a name we have adopted, together with the excellent figure…It is about the size of the Common Domestic Cat, and has upright pointed ears.

The colour of the face, and lower part of the neck, is whiteish. The breast, and lower belly,are a clear grey. The body, in general, is part yellow and clear grey, mixed with black disposed in transverse rays. “

†

WEIRD WEEKEND NORTH 2016

April 2-3rd 2016. Glen Vaudrey,organiser, can be contacted at glenvaudrey@gmail.com

Venue:
http://www.rixtonwithglazebrook.net/ven

A FLYING SNAKE IN SCOTLAND

The Highland Notebook or Sketches and Anecdotes 1843

Robert Carruthers

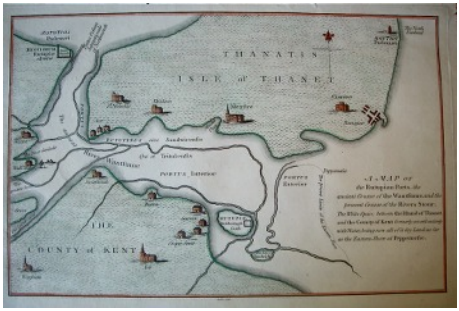
Following a comment about the damage to a pagan Witch Stone by a gentleman, Carruthers remarks on page 165:

"...To crown this supernatural machinery, a fire broke out *simultaneously* a short time since in the moss of Inshoch (which forms part of the celebrated heath),which we are assured, looked for a the world like the cauldron itsel`; and a strange serpent was seen flying about in the air!"

Below, three items from Christopher Chatfield, e-mail of December 23rd 2014 and also BILK 186 July 2015

MONSTROUS FISH ISLE OF THANET 1574 Gentleman's Magazine, 'History of the Isle of Thanet' (Lewis), 1772, p. 461:

"1574 July 9. Near Broadstairs on a little sand now called Fishness a monstrous fish came ashore and died next day, after roarings which were heard above a mile. It was 22 yards long, the lower jaw opened 12 feet, and one of the eyes was more than a cart and six horses could draw; a man stood upright in the place his eye was taken from; thickness from back to top of belly (which lay upward) was 14 feet, tail of same breadth; three men stood upright in the mouth; some ribs were 16 feet long, tongue 15 feet long, liver two cartloads and a man might creep into its nostrils.



Isle of Thanet c. 1770.

Wikipedia Creative Commons .

Gentleman's Magazine, 1767, p. 329: **STRANGE KIND OF FISH 1767**

"1767 June 24. Was found in the mackarel-nets off Folkstone, a strange kind of a fish: it measures in length about 13 feet; its fore fins are about two feet long, and the body resembles that of a porpus (porpoise?); it has a broad thin tail, about six feet long. The fishermen declare that they never saw such a one before."
(I think this may have been a Thresher Shark)

HORSE SHAPED SEA CREATURE 1801

An odd story from The Times, 8th May, 1801, (although not in Britain)
"Hamburgh Gazette, letter dated April 10, 1801: On the morning of the 8th, an amphibious animal, horse-shaped, nearly 9 feet high and 'of a proportionate length', with a long tail and 'two fins as sharp as the finest steel', impenetrable to musket balls, came ashore near Ostend. 'He ravaged the plains with impunity', devouring 20 sheep. 'After the most sanguinary depredations, he retired, and plunged into the sea'. Next day he came ashore again and was taken in a net."

GIANT CONDOR IN SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

Boston Traveller April 23rd 1830

EXTRAORDINARY CONDOR - "In the course of the day I had the opportunity of shooting a condor, it was so satiated with its repast on the carcass of a horse, as to suffer me to approach within pistol shot before it extended its enormous wings to take its flight, which was to me the signal to fire;and having loaded it with an ample charge of pellets, my aim proved effectual and fatal. What a formidable monster did I behold in the ravine beneath me;screaming and flapping in the last convulsive struggles of life! It may be difficult to believe, that the most gigantic animal which inhabits the earth or ocean can be equalled by a tenant of the air;and these persons who have never seen a larger bird than our mountain eagle , will probably read with astonishment of a species of that same bird, in the southern hemisphere, being so large and strong as to seize an ox with its talons and to lift it into the air, whereon it lets it fall to the ground, in order to kill it and prey upon the carcass. But this astonishment must in great degree subside, when the dimensions of the bird are taken into consideration, and which, incredible as they may appear I now insert *verbatim* from a note taken down with my own hand

“When the wings are spread,they measure sixteen paces (forty feet) in extent, from point to point; the feathers are eight paces (twenty feet) in length; and the quill part two palms (eight paces) in circumference. It is said to have powers sufficient to carry off five rhinoceros” - *Travels in Peru.*

MYSTERY CATS IN MACCLESFIELD

The first case comes from about 2004 and was told to me by a co-worker at the Oxfam charity shop, `A`, in the words of her partner `P`:

“About 10 years ago I was walking along a foot path leading from Cliff Lane to Calrofold Lane. There are lots of gorse,holly and hawthorn bushes .

A large grey cat-like creature with pointy ears crossed the path and stopped about 25m in front of me. It stared at me and seemed to look into my soul. It wasn`t scared and it slunk off into the undergrowth. It wasn`t a domestic cat. Possibly a lynx.”

The second case was reported in the Macclesfield Express. May 26th 2015

CAT SIGHTING."A mysterious big cat has been spotted in Macclesfield. Grandmother Sheila Foster claims she spied the unusual animal while looking out from front window of her home on Moss Lane at 6 am on Monday. She described a "brown-grey big cat the size of a large dog which had a long tail with a kink in it". It was stood on a wall about 50 yards across the road. Sheila,72,said "At first I thought ot was a big stone then it moved. I could hardly believe my eyes."

Also from Beastwatch UK Facebook group. December 13th 2014:” A reliable person told me today that about 1 year ago his car hit a 3 1/2 - 4ft long black cat with a silver sheen to its coat in the hills above Bollington,Cheshire. It was not a large feral moggy but certainly different. He saw a similar cat stalking at night a few years ago near Pwhellehi Wales.”

FLYING SEA SERPENT

Aberdeen American August 27th 1911

New York - "Passengers and crew of the steamship Celtic, brought with them to New York a revival of the sea serpent tales of other years. They reported having passed the other day a formidable looking creature which was going at high speed in pursuit of a school of young whales. The monster, they said, had wings,although it appeared to be an aquatic animal, and rose frequently ten feet or more from the water. Whales and pursuer faded from sight within a few minutes."

THE TRAGEDY OF THE LOCH NESS MONSTER

Loch Ness, Dr Tucker:"In 1959, at 39, Dr Denys Tucker was the Natural History Museum's chief scientist and a world authority on eels. "Then he publicly declared that he had found the Loch Ness Monster. Within a year, Dr Tucker had been sacked from his job at the museum." Thus begins an article in *The Indepen*dent (by Cahal Milmo, 17 April 2015) about the tragic story of the famous cryptozoologist. "Papers kept out of the public eye for 50 years reveal the alarm caused by Dr Tucker's legal cause in Whitehall and the attempts to ensure that museum trustees – led by the Archbishop [of Canterbury] – were not dragged into the witness box. The file […] shows that senior officials were deeply concerned at Dr Tucker's High Court claim for wrongful dismissal and worried that if he won 'HMG will never again be able to fire a civil servant, except possibly for sedition or larceny'. Until his death five years ago in France, the fish expert continued to believe he had been the victim of a conspiracy to push him from office." The reason? "Dr Tucker declared in the mainstream and scientific press that he had witnessed what he believed to be an 'unnamed animal' on a visit to Loch Ness. In his opinion, the creature could only be an Elasmosaurus [… He] wrote to New Scientist: 'I, a professional marine zoologist, did see a large hump travelling across flat calm water on 22 March 1959, and do quite unashamedly assert that it belonged to an unnamed animal. I am quite satisfied that we have in Loch Ness one of the most exciting and important problems in British zoology today.' […] But inside the […] NHM the enthusiasm of its principal scientific officer for chasing monsters was just the latest in a growing list of concerns about Dr Tucker that within months led to his sacking. According to one account given

to The Independent, the Nessie hunter was told by his superiors to reconsider if his obsession was a 'suitable topic' for the museum's lead expert." Before, Dr Tucker, who had been with the Museum since 1949, and had been its chief scientist since 1958, made headlines with his 1959 claim, published in *Nature*, that mature European eels could not make the 3,000 mile journey through the ocean currents to the Sargasso Sea, and that instead they were a sub-mutation of American eels born in the Sargasso Sea which then headed east. He later had to admit it was nonsense. "When these reverses were combined with a chequered disciplinary record, which included memos musing on the sexual proclivities of his colleagues and an incident in which he was rumoured to seems Dr Tucker's superiors had run out of patience. On 31 July 1960, Dr Tucker was called to the office of the museum's director, Terence Morrison-Scott, and told he was being dismissed and barred indefinitely from the museum's collection. The reason for his sacking by the board of trustees was given as 'long, continued, vexatious, insubordinate and generally offensive conduct towards the museum's director and other senior staff'." Dr Tucker had not expected this, and he "embarked on a seven-year legal case to sue the trustees, led by the then head of the Church of England, Archbishop Lord Fisher, for damages and wrongful dismissal. […] The Treasury file obtained shows that Dr Tucker's refusal to accept his sacking caused deep consternation in Whitehall, in particular his desire to sue the Archbishop and other trustees in person. In the end, Dr Tucker lost his battle for reinstatement but not before it had been all the way to the Court of Appeal. He settled down to a new life in rented accommodation in Wimbledon, writing occasional reviews and papers. Oliver Crimmen, the NHM's curator of fish, met Dr Tucker after being contacted by him shortly before his death. He said: '[Denys] clearly felt there had been some sort of conspiracy…Things had got very personal, to the point of paranoia. He seems to have been an impossible character to keep within the confines of the orderly, Civil Service atmosphere… He paid a heavy price… He did feel bitter about it – you could tell he was still angry.'" He still believed in Nessie: "Mr Crimmen said: 'He told me he was still satisfied that the Loch Ness monster is a still a concrete material problem.'" (credit: Andreas Trottmann)

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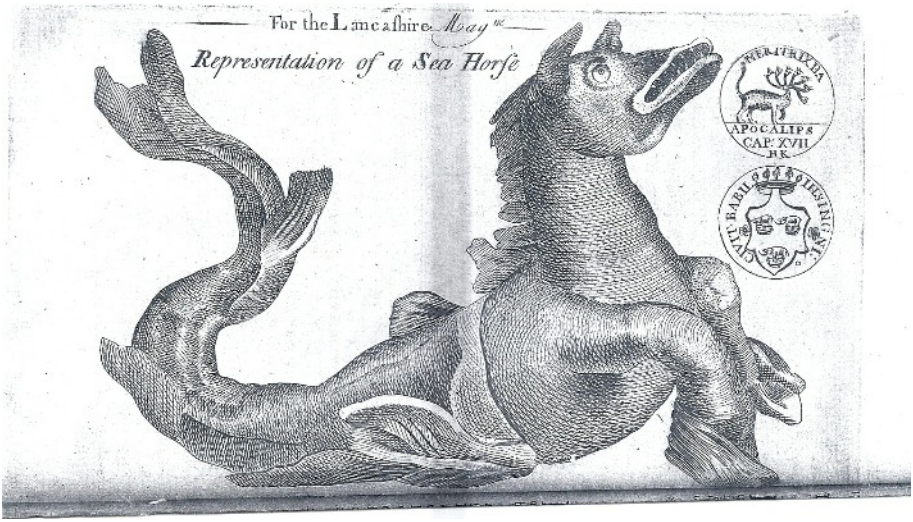
HORSE HEADED SEA MONSTER OF 1763



Sea Monster. Lancashire Magazine May 31st 1763.

JayBizarreZoo Cooney of the Zombie Plesiosaur Facebook group described Cadbosaurus as a Merhorse,in April 2015. Earlier, in March, Scott Mardis posted illustrations of the Lough Nahooin " Horse Eel" of 1968. Could "horse-headed" sea serpents be a kind of primitive cetacean?

SHARK A LONG WAY UP AN AUSTRALIAN RIVER

Oregonian May 7th 1951. INLAND SHARK FOOLS EXPERTS.

Darwin,Australia. "Aussie fish experts are intrigued by the case of the wandering shark. A man-eating variety, the shark was hooked by a flabergasted fishermen in the Northern territory. What a salt-water shark was doing in a fresh-water stream 300 miles from the ocean is something that has everyone baffled. The experts think the shark was,too."

LARGE SPIDER IN LONDON 1798

According to The Naturalist`s Pocket Magazine (1800) volume 5 a strange large giant spider like this turned up during the night in the kitchen of Mr Morley`s House, 91 Drury Lane, London on August 29th 1798. He found this spider at night in his kitchen. The author(s) called it the `Great Long Legged Spider`,similar to the `Carter.`It was 5 1/2 inches from point to point, 5/8 inch long,2/8 broad.`it was unknown prior to this in England.

A Waco Snake.

Waco Telephone: J. W. Boynton brought to the Telephone yesterday afternoon what was a genuine curiosity and the existence of which has been denied by some people. It was nothing more nor less than a snake with legs. The snake which was a small one, not more than sixteen inches long, was what is known as a "thunder snake," the body being covered by alternate splotches of black and red, intermingled in a manner which made a very pretty effect, almost causing you to forget that you were looking at a serpent. The snake had two legs, each about two inches long, and the boys who killed him claim that he pulled himself along very rapidly by their aid. The legs were set opposite one another under his body about four inches from his head. Each leg had four toes or feelers.

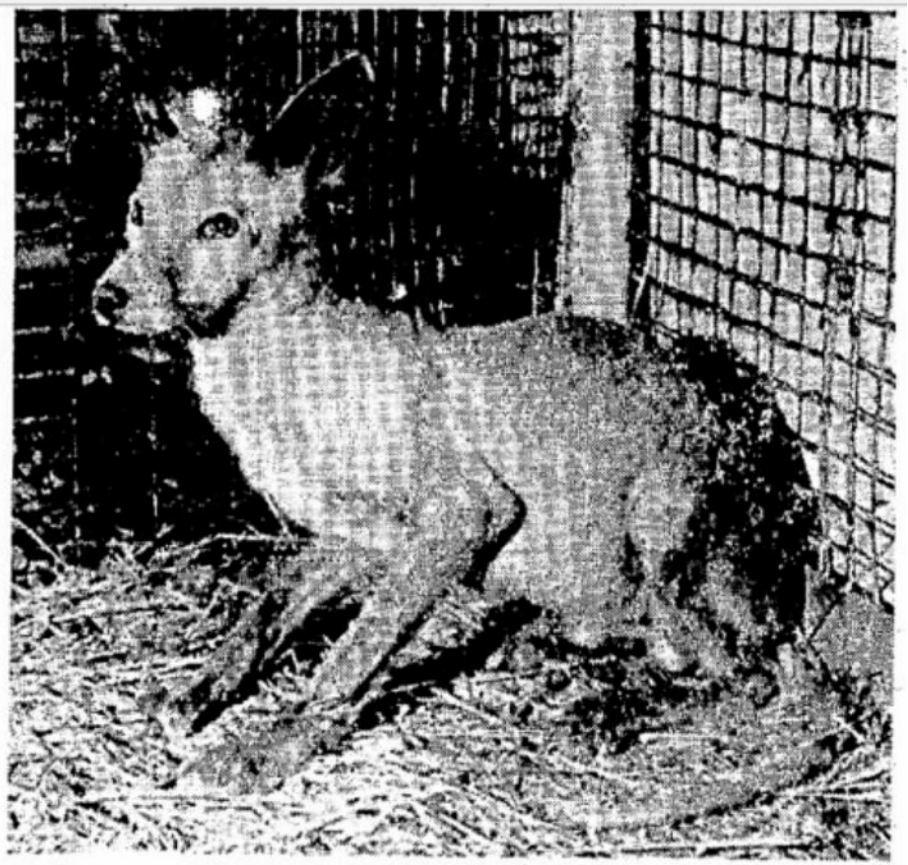
Above: Fort Worth Morning Register August 12th 1899

SNAKE WITH LEGS AND FEET IS REPORTED TO BE

FOUND IN AFRICA

The Sacramento Bee July 20th 1950

"A snake with four legs,feet and joints is reported to have been killed by the district commissioner in Kalabo, a distant area in the North Rhodesian bush. Many strange tales of unusual snakes have come from this district in the past. Whistling snakes have been reported and once the natives insisted they had found a snake which could sing."



— AP Wirephoto

'Whatsit' Has Everybody Guesing

This strange animal at the Minot, S. D., Zoo has area biologists guessing as to its chromosomal makeup. Dubbed "Whatsit," the animal was found on a North Dakota farm.

This animal looks like a dog-deer hybrid to me,but not quite…Any ideas readers ? From Tucson Daily Citizen November 27th 1971

Monkey Boxers. Martial arts.

© Taiping Institute Taiwan. Photo taken by Louis-Philippe-Messelier in the 1930s.

Letters to Flying Snake

November 12th 2014

Dear Richard, **INTERESTING SQUIRREL BEHAVIOUR**

I live next to a Victorian churchyard over-run by the American grey squirrel, *Sciurus carolinensis*. I`ve observed two unusual instances of behaviour.

The first was when I was eating a bag of pretzels. (I was three stone heavier in those days!) A squirrel came down the nearest tree and moved around me on the ground a full three hundred and sixty degrees, all the while making its aggressive churring noise, as if saying "I`ve got you covered!" I assume it was asserting territorial rights - and maybe rights to a pretzel.

More recently, about two years ago, I saw a squirrel at the top of a young tree about twelve feet tall, on a bare branch, swinging itself precariously to and fro, as if preparing to pole vault (or Tarzan) to the ground.

Further to your Notes And Queries in *Flying Snake* 7, it may not be just mice and spiders that like music. In a humourous American paperback by Bill Adler jr called Outwitting Squirrels (1988), on p.150 I found the following:

"*According to Dr C Hart Merriam,pre-World War II experiments with squirrels showed:*

They were extremely fond of music,and it affected them in a peculiar manner. Some were not only fascinated, but actually spellbound,by the music-box or guitar. And one particularly weak-minded individual was so unrefined in his taste that if I advanced slowly whistling "Just Before The Battle,Mother" in as pathetic a tone as I could muster for the occasion, he would permit me even to stroke his back,sometimes expressing his pleasure by making a low purring sound.

February 6th 2015

Dear Richard,

VISAYAN WARTY PIG

I`ve just found this rather sad little story in the *Torygraph* about a Visayan warty pig. It doesn`t give a very good impression of the male of this critically endangered species uncastrated.

Its relative the Vietnamese warty pig is,of course,even rarer (believed extinct,I believe,until 1995 when zoologists found some of its meat in a market:since then not a squeak).

I suppose if humans eat pigs we can hardly blame pigs for eating pigs…

I was re-reading Virgil`s *Aeniad* the other day (as you do) and came to the description of the sea-serpents that grab Laocoon:" their blood-red crests/Reared up over the water" (Book 2, lines 206-7).I saw an oarfish on a recent BBC 2 programme with Chris Packham called *Nature`s Weirdest Events*, and it has a reddish crest: did this inspire Virgil, I wonder?

Richard George

A CRYPTID CALLED THE ARK-LA IN ALASKA

The following e-mail is dated January 7th 2014 but I thought it interesting so decided to include an abbreviation of it here. It was from Judith Gray, Reference Specialist, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington DC 20540-4610.

"Initial looks at Alaska Native bibliographies do not show anything close to "ark-la", etc. But looking in the book called Giants,Monsters,and Dragons: An Encyclopaedia of Folklore,Legend,and Myth by Carol Rose…I`m seeing things such as Arakho, "a gigantic beast or dragon in the myths and beliefs of the Buriat people of ancient Siberia." The Arakho is also known as the Alkl-ha (linguistically, "r" and "l" are rather often interchanged), and the entry for the latter is more complete: " a winged dragon of such a size that its black wings, when spread, covered the entire sky, allowing no light whatsoever to penetrate to the earth. In its abode in the heavens,this monster periodically engulfed either the sun or the moon, but their heat was too much for it to consume…The marks observed on the moon today are the indentations caused by the fangs of Alklha in failed attempts to swallow it."

METEOROLOGICAL ANOMALY

A crepuscular light photographed on June 20th 2015 in Gloucestershire by Richard Colborne around 21:30.

"There had been an exceptionally bright rainbow towards the East, caused by low sun and dark storm clouds above; there having been a downpour about half an hour earlier. I'd been outside and on returning upstairs, even before I could reach for my camera, I saw the rainbow had gone. Later – perhaps another 15 minutes – I noticed the red light through the Venetian blind and opened it fully. This time I reached for my camera and found it missing. Realising I'd left it in the boot of the car I had to fetch it; concerned that there would be a re-run of what happened with the rainbow. I believe the red light had faded a little by the time I got back upstairs with the camera, but I was able to capture it."